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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001658

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)  
SUBJECT: ELECTION UPDATE

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

**¶1.** (U) The Election Steering Committee (Comite de Pilotage) met October 3 to review the status of election preparations and the general electoral calendar. Committee membership includes Chief of Mission representation from donors, UN agency heads, technical support staff, and senior GDRC officials. The meeting was chaired by the UN Acting SRSG Ross Mountain. The Ambassador attended for the U.S. Mission; GDRC representatives included the Minister of Defense, Vice Ministers of Interior and Budget, and the President of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI). EU Special Envoy Aldo Ajello also attended the session.

Voter Registration

**¶2.** (U) The CEI president provided an updated voter registration chart showing that slightly over 14.7 million have registered through October 2. Particular improvement was reported from the previous summary report in Eastern and Western Kasai provinces, and in North Kivu. Of the planned total of 9,090 registration centers, 1,813 are not yet open, mostly in Equateur and Bandundu provinces where registration just got underway September 25. Hundreds of other registration centers are still operating in nine provinces. A handout was distributed detailing remaining needs to deploy people and materials to open the remaining centers, including helicopter support not yet scheduled, vehicles, diesel fuel, gas, bicycles, and motorcycles. The UN reported some mechanical/technical difficulties with helicopters currently being utilized, and made an appeal for any additional air support that could be provided. The UN and CEI expressed particular thanks to Belgium for arranging for extraordinary assistance provided last week by a Belgian Air Force C-130 sent to supplement existing efforts to deploy registration materials and personnel.

**¶3.** (SBU) Looking ahead, the CEI presented a schedule that calls for the opening of the last registration centers no later than October 23. CEI President Malu Malu explained that the CEI is now conducting a center-by-center review which will provide further details regarding specific areas. In addition, mobile registration centers continue to operate to address specific requirements, as will be the case through the remainder of the registration exercise. Under the current timeline the CEI is planning to close the last of the registration centers, in essence closing voter registration, by November 13.

Financing

**¶4.** (SBU) UNDP presented an updated election financing chart for both the CEI election budget, currently estimated at roughly USD 270 million, and the related election "security" budget, set at roughly USD 48.6 million. The latter sum is fully covered by pledges from European government (the European Union plus individual country pledges) totaling USD 57.8 million to-date.

**¶5.** (SBU) UNDP reported pledges totaling USD 276.6 million have now been registered, in theory fully covering the CEI budget. The total, however, includes a new pledge of USD 20 million from the GDRC, in addition to the USD 20 million already promised. (Note: The original USD 20 million GDRC pledge includes USD 7.2 million from French designated budgetary support funds. End Note.) The Ambassador asked the GDRC Budget Vice Minister to confirm the additional pledge. He affirmed that the government intends to earmark an additional USD 20 million from the CY 2006 budget. In reviewing the figures, including promised GDRC monies, the UNDP did emphasize that while the pledge total looks promising, there are remaining serious "cash flow" concerns.

Election Calendar

**¶6.** (C) Based on the current voter registration schedule, the CEI presented a revised time line leading to a required Constitutional referendum. Key dates include an October 29 closing date to arrange for purchase of goods and printing contracts, assembly of "voting center" kits for polling stations between October 28 and November 14 (excluding voter registration lists). Distribution of kits to train election personnel is to be completed to 64 "liaison offices" by

November 20, and subsequent distribution to roughly 200 "territorial centers" by December 3. A full deployment schedule and logistics plan for deployment of voting kits to the roughly 40,000 planned polling stations was also outlined, using MONUC and commercial fixed wing aircraft, MONUC and commercial helicopters, and ground vehicles and boats, all to be completed by December 16.

¶17. (C) The CEI plans to complete printing of voter registration lists for Katanga, Eastern Kasai, and Western Kasai provinces by November 13, for Kinshasa, Bas Congo, Orientale, North and South Kivu provinces by November 21 - 23, and for Bandundu and Equateur provinces (the last two provinces undergoing registration) by December 9. Registration lists are to be distributed via the same network as utilized for the voting kits from November 20 - December ¶16. Under this scenario, the referendum date itself would be December 18, representing a roughly three-week delay from the originally announced November 27 target.

¶18. (C) The CEI revised calendar has been the subject of discussion in recent weeks among CEI officials, foreign experts and donors, political leaders, and in the Council of Ministers. In the October 3 meeting, several individuals expressed dismay over the prospect of the referendum being delayed beyond the originally-announced November 27 date. None, however, were able to offer suggestions as to how the work plan presented by the CEI could be shortened to arrive at an earlier date. By the end of the discussion, several speakers, including the Ambassador, emphasized the importance of adhering to the new date at the risk of undermining the credibility of the general electoral process.

Election Law

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¶19. (C) There was also a general agreement on the need to finalize and move forward the draft general election law now pending in the GDRC executive. Defense Minister Onusumba reported that the GDRC Political Committee is scheduled to meet October 4 to review the draft law. He expressed hope that agreement could be reached quickly, and anticipated that subsequent final approval by the Council of Ministers would be forthcoming soon after. The CEI President noted the need for the Commission to know provisions of the new law to enable other preparatory work for the general elections to move forward on a timely basis. There was consensus within the Committee to emphasize to all members of the GDRC the importance of producing a final draft text quickly, and to members of the Parliament on the need to speedily reach agreement regarding essential provisions of the law as well. (Note: The general election law cannot be formally adopted by the Parliament, nor promulgated into law before referendum approval of the new Constitution; the new Constitution provides the legal basis for the election law. There is broad agreement in the executive and among parliamentary leaders, however, on the need for de facto parliamentary approval of the provisions of the new law as soon as possible. End note.)

Comment

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¶10. (C) The need for a referendum delay beyond the November 27 date has been anticipated for some time, given delays experienced in getting voter registration materials distributed and subsequent delays in the registration process. It will be very important politically to respect the new December 18 target to obtain timely approval of the new constitution, and politically to ease the way for the next and final extension of the Transition period through June 30, 2006. That approval must be voted by the parliament before December 31. More encouraging are the continuing progress in reported registration numbers and the new GDRC pledge of money to finance the elections. While the pledge is welcome, we caution that GDRC financial promises represent something less than guarantees. In addition, there will be continuing concerns about availability of money and resources in time to permit needed operations to be completed per the work schedule to ensure all key milestones in the election calendar can be maintained. End comment.

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